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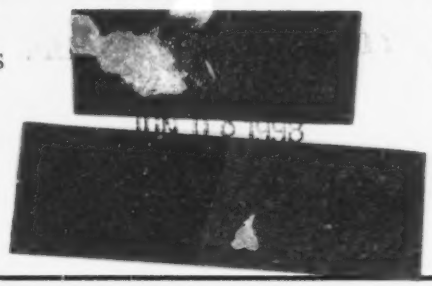

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 6 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Section 18. Economic development in Europe (*continued*)

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 153: Human resources management (A/52/7, A/52/438 and A/52/439; A/C.5/51/55 and Corr.1 and A/C.5/52/2)

1. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that she intended to provide the leadership necessary to ensure that the Office of Human Resources Management carried out its mandated programmes, to act as a catalyst for change and to guide and strengthen the implementation of the Secretary-General's human resources strategy. The Organization had a hard-working staff, but some of its work processes needed streamlining; for example, the duplication of effort between her Office and the Executive Offices must be analysed and remedied. Such efforts would enable her Office to focus on its proper role of dealing with policy issues and carrying out monitoring functions. Her Office would fully support and take a leading role in the reform programme; it had already initiated discussions on the convening of the human resources task force proposed by the Secretary-General and had started a series of meetings with heads of departments and offices and staff representatives to hear their views on human resources management in the Secretariat.

2. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the performance appraisal system (A/C.5/51/55 and Corr.1) had been submitted pursuant to resolution 51/226. She was pleased that the General Assembly supported the introduction of a credible Performance Appraisal System (PAS), since coherent and transparent evaluation and performance management were critical for the establishment of a positive working environment and, consequently, a more effective and responsive Organization. The Secretary-General attached great importance to the development of an organizational culture that would encourage all staff to contribute to their maximum potential. The PAS was only one element of an integrated effort to create that new culture. It had been introduced in conjunction with career support and skills development programmes that sought to promote attitudinal change among staff at all levels.

3. The impact and effectiveness of that new approach to performance management depended heavily on the quality and commitment of supervisors and managers. Accordingly, the proposed budget for the Office of Human Resources Management for the biennium 1998-1999 reflected a major emphasis on management development.

4. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the PAS was based on performance management principles recommended by the International Civil Service Commission and had been developed in consultation with managers and the Staff Management Coordination Committee. Before its introduction, it had been pilot tested and redesigned in the light of feedback from the participants. Some 11,000 staff at all major duty stations had been trained in the system's principles and procedures, and nearly all departments and offices had begun to implement the PAS in 1996.

5. Since the establishment of an effective performance management system was seen as a long-term endeavour that would require fine-tuning, feedback had been sought from managers and staff representatives at the end of the first full year of implementation. Both managers and staff had recognized the value of the overall concepts of work planning, ongoing monitoring, feedback and appraisal and their potential contribution to the development of a performance-based management culture, and had appreciated the fact that the PAS was based on pre-established performance expectations and not ex post facto evaluation, as in the past. However, many of them had felt that the process was unduly complex and cumbersome, that it was hard to apply to certain types of work and that it required stronger linkages with staff development and career support mechanisms. Consequently, her Office was significantly streamlining the system, while maintaining the sound principles on which it was based.

6. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/216, the Secretary-General had submitted a report on a system of performance awards or bonuses (A/52/439) for a limited number of staff whose performance was outstanding. The Secretary-General had considered that idea in the context of his efforts to improve overall organizational performance. An effective performance management system was essential for improving both individual and organizational performance, and the PAS was one element of such a system.

7. The Secretary-General emphasized that the PAS should be the only mechanism by which performance was evaluated and recognized, but acknowledged that the PAS was not yet sufficiently established to support a monetary award system. Therefore, he proposed a gradual approach in which consideration would first be given to the establishment of non-monetary awards, in line with those suggested by the International Civil Service Commission, for individual or team excellence. At a later stage, the possibility of introducing cash awards or bonuses would be considered. However, such a system should not be seen as a substitute for adequate, competitive and equitable compensation, nor should it detract from the overall pursuit of competitive conditions of service.

8. The report also stressed the need to address underperformance more proactively and effectively. Managers should help staff to develop performance improvement plans, where necessary, but continued underperformance should result in appropriate sanctions.

9. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/226, the Secretary-General had submitted a report on a family leave programme for United Nations staff (A/52/438), which recognized that demographic changes in the workforce and new social trends had brought family and quality-of-work considerations to the forefront of the human resources management agenda. Employers had increasingly recognized that assisting staff in meeting their family obligations was essential for maintaining productivity, minimizing absenteeism and staff turnover, reducing conflict and stress and improving overall performance. Many national civil services, including the comparator, provided for family leave through either legislation or collective agreement. The family leave programme presented in the Secretary-General's report refrained from creating supplementary leave entitlements, as requested by the General Assembly; it simply allowed staff to use their current uncertified sick leave entitlements in a more flexible manner to respond to family emergencies and other special circumstances.

10. On behalf of the United Nations Security Coordinator, she introduced the Secretary-General's report on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/52/2), which covered the issues of staff security and safety, arrest and detention of officials, taxation of officials and travel restrictions. Annex III to the report contained detailed information from United Nations bodies and related organizations.

11. Despite all efforts to ensure staff security and safety, 22 staff members had lost their lives during the reporting period; that was more than twice the number reported the previous year. Since the preparation of the report, four more staff members, who had worked for the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had lost their lives in the service of the Organization. Moreover, since 1 January 1997, there had been four instances of hostage-taking involving 14 staff members. Fortunately, all of them had been safely released, but the number of such incidents seemed to be rising. In May 1997 the United Nations Security Coordinator had convened an inter-agency meeting on ways to improve staff security. The Administrative Committee on Coordination was currently considering the conclusions and recommendations of that meeting. Annex I to the report contained detailed information on cases of arrest and detention of officials, which were of great concern to the Organization.

12. Greater efforts were needed to enhance staff security. The Secretary-General relied on the active assistance of Member States in that regard, since the primary responsibility for the security and protection of staff members and their dependants rested with the host Governments. The ability of staff members to perform their functions in favourable conditions was crucial to the success of the Organization. She counted on the Committee's assistance in addressing those issues.

13. **Mr. Mihut** (Romania) said, with respect to the Organization's recruitment policy, that his delegation, which represented a country below the mid-point of its desirable range in the Secretariat, had strongly supported resolution 51/226. He was pleased that national recruitment examinations for P-1/P-2 and P-3 posts were to be held in Romania and other countries. That recruitment method reflected the Secretary-General's intention to rejuvenate the Organization.

14. He was therefore concerned to note that most of the post reductions included in the reform proposals were below the P-4 level. That tendency threatened to hamper not only the reform process itself, but also the functioning of the Organization. The Secretariat must review its policy vis-a-vis the P-1/P-2 and P-3 posts so as to give young people from different Member States a real opportunity to contribute to the Organization's activities. The P-3 posts should be filled solely through competitive examinations and through the advancement of P-1/P-2 staff.

Agenda item 115: Programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (*continued*)

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*)

Administrative expenses of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/52/278 and A/52/519)

15. **Mr. Goethel** (Chairman of the Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board), introducing the report of the Standing Committee on the administrative expenses of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/52/278), said that paragraphs 1 to 10 of the report provided background information on the functioning of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board and of its Standing Committee, and on the Fund's administrative structure and financial arrangements, including the related expenses borne by the United Nations budget. Paragraphs 11 to 45 provided information on the studies considered by

the Standing Committee which had affected its proposals concerning the revised budget estimates for the Fund for 1996-1997 and the budget requests for 1998-1999. Those studies had included a preliminary consideration of issues to be addressed in the concept paper to be submitted to the Board in 1998 on current and future administrative arrangements between the Fund and the United Nations and other member organizations.

16. Some fundamental cost-sharing issues raised in the budget proposals for the biennium 1998-1999 had given rise to serious concerns in the Standing Committee because of their potential implications for the long-standing administrative and financial relationships between the Fund and its member organizations, particularly the United Nations. Those concerns related to certain decisions which had already been taken and others which were apparently being considered by the Secretariat. The observations and conclusions contained in the Standing Committee's report were intended to elicit the views of Member States, since the General Assembly served as the legislative body for the United Nations pension system.

17. In respect of the biennium 1996-1997, the Standing Committee had approved for submission to the General Assembly revised estimates amounting to approximately $45.4 million, an increase of some $4 million over the amount approved by the General Assembly in 1996. Approximately $395,000 of the total requested amount related to contingency provisions to finance the construction or refurbishing of new office space.

18. Since its inception, the United Nations had always provided the office space required by the Fund free of charge. The Fund had received no specific response from the United Nations administration as to whether, when and how the Fund's need for additional office space might be accommodated. As to costs, the Fund had been advised that, pending agreement on long-term cost-sharing, the current arrangements for the provision of space should continue through 1998 on the understanding that, if additional costs were incurred in providing more space, the Fund would have to meet those costs from its own resources. That position represented a major departure from the current arrangements and had significant long-term implications. The Standing Committee had taken the view that the United Nations, as the host organization, should continue to provide office space. The additional resources requested in the revised estimates for the current biennium to meet the Fund's most pressing short-term space requirements would therefore be used exclusively for the reconstruction and redesign of existing or new office space, and not for the rental of additional space.

19. The budget proposals for the biennium 1998-1999 submitted by the Standing Committee amounted to $50.9 million, comprising $16.4 for administrative costs, $33.9 for investment costs, and $579,000 for audit costs.

20. In its review of the initial budget proposals submitted by the Secretary of the Board, the Standing Committee had focused mainly on administrative costs, particularly on the consequences of the decision by the United Nations administration to allocate to individual users all charges related to computer mainframe operations. With regard to the Fund's future usage of the mainframe computer at the International Computing Centre (ICC) at Geneva, the United Nations administration had departed from long-standing practice by deciding to charge the full cost to the Fund.

21. The United Nations had always made its mainframe computer facilities available to the Fund. When new systems and applications were developed in the 1990s, the Fund had begun to pay additional charges. The de facto mainframe computer cost-sharing reflected in the administrative expenses for the biennium 1996-1997 was in the ratio of 75 to 25 per cent, with the United Nations paying the lion's share.

22. The Secretary of the Board had proposed an interim 50/50 sharing arrangement, but the United Nations had decided not to include any provision for the ICC mainframe computer costs in its proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999. The entire cost was therefore to be borne by the Fund. The Secretary had accordingly been forced to include the entire mainframe computer costs in his budget proposals; that represented a more than fivefold increase over the amount budgeted for in the biennium 1996-1997.

23. After extensive and fruitless debate on a provisional cost-sharing arrangement, the Standing Committee had decided to propose resources in the Fund's budget for the biennium 1998-1999 that corresponded to 50 per cent of the mainframe computer costs, or $1,483,300. That decision had been taken on the understanding that the Board would reconsider the matter in 1998 in the context of the review of services and facilities provided to the Fund by the United Nations.

24. The complexities of managing the Fund could be expected to grow in the future; greater complexity would require an increase in the number of staff and a strengthening of administrative infrastructure.

25. The administrative services and facilities which the United Nations provided to the Fund were more comprehensive than those provided by other organizations

because the General Assembly possessed exclusive decision-making authority over the administrative expenses of the Fund; because its Secretariat served as the host organization for the Fund; because financial responsibility for Fund investments had been delegated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and because the Fund's central secretariat provided local pension services for the United Nations and its affiliated programmes.

26. It was therefore essential that any changes to current arrangements should take account of the interests of all the parties concerned and be implemented gradually. On the other hand, a fundamental change might lead to a substantial increase in the administrative expenses charged to the Fund, which would have to be reflected in the actuarial valuations thereof.

27. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the administrative expenses of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/52/519), said that the financial implications of the Advisory Committee's recommendations would be a reduction of $850,200 in the Fund's expenses. Should the Fifth Committee agree with the Advisory Committee's assessment, he did not expect the Secretariat to propose a corresponding increase of the same amount in the regular budget.

28. The Advisory Committee had also observed that where long-standing arrangements existed between two entities, any changes should be made gradually and in an orderly manner, not unilaterally as appeared to have been the case in the current instance. Unless changes were implemented with due care and attention, Member States would ultimately have to foot the bill when the actuarial balance was adversely affected.

29. **Ms. Shenwick** (United States of America), referring to paragraph 62 of the report of the Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/52/278), said it was not the policy of the United Nations to purchase furniture on a contingency basis. Furthermore, over the past six years the Pension Fund had replaced its furniture three times. The Fund should account for the whereabouts of the old furniture. Given that staff numbers had remained constant, the need for additional furniture might suggest that the Fund was hiring additional staff under general temporary assistance provisions.

30. With regard to the funding of the mainframe computer system, her delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation as currently budgeted. The Secretariat and the Pension Fund should discuss a whole range of cost-sharing arrangements and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee should submit more detailed costings. If it emerged from discussions between the Secretariat and the Pension Fund that the Secretariat would have to pay more than was proposed, her delegation assumed that those costs would have to be absorbed within the Secretary-General's existing proposed programme budget. Generally speaking, her delegation was concerned that the Pension Fund seemed to be out of step with the rest of the Organization in terms of the need to reform and achieve greater efficiency.

Agenda Item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/52/6 (Vol. I and II), A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part IV and V) and A/52/16 and Add.1)

Section 7. Policy coordination and sustainable development (*continued*)

Section 8. Africa: New Agenda for Development (*continued*)

Section 9. Economic and social information and policy analysis (*continued*)

Section 10. Development support and management services (*continued*)

Section 11A. Trade and development (*continued*)

Section 11B. International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (*continued*)

Section 12. Environment (*continued*)

Section 13. Human settlements (*continued*)

Section 14. Crime control (*continued*)

Section 15. International drug control (*continued*)

31. **Mr. Maddens** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Norway, said that the European Union agreed with the distinction made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 31 of that Committee's first report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (A/52/7) between parliamentary documentation and documents for the public. However, the report of the Advisory Committee itself would have been much more readable if it had incorporated some of the features of the latter category of documentation.

32. With regard to sections 7, 9 and 10 of the proposed programme budget (A/52/6/Rev.1/Vol.I), the European Union welcomed the proposed merger of the three

Departments dealing with economic and social affairs into a new unified structure. That merger would help to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to respond more effectively to the requirements of the poorest Member States; focus its capacities more effectively on priority areas and the needs of civil society; contribute to the smooth functioning of the Economic and Social Council; and ensure positive follow-up to world conferences. The European Union trusted that it would soon receive the necessary revisions to the proposed programme budget reflecting the structural adjustments resulting from the change. In that connection, it had noted the Secretariat's assurances that the programme of work of the former Departments would be entirely covered by the new Department's programme. It also welcomed the emphasis on the further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development, in section 7, subprogramme 3, and trusted that sufficient resources would be made available to evaluate the implementation of international instruments.

33. As far as the machinery of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was concerned, his delegation would be grateful if the Secretariat would provide an organizational chart of ACC and more detailed information on its operating costs.

34. Given the importance of mainstreaming the gender perspective at the subprogramme level, the European Union was particularly concerned about the Advisory Committee's comment (A/52/7, para. IV.9) that mandated activities for the advancement of women had been significantly curtailed and that the Division for the Advancement of Women might not be able to carry out its programme of work. The Secretary-General should continue to strengthen the Division for the Advancement of Women and ensure implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women.

35. In paragraph IV.18 of its report (A/52/7, Part IV) the Advisory Committee noted that the Secretary-General had proposed the abolition of a number of posts solely because they were vacant. The European Union believed that it was the inclusion of a post in the budget which should be justified, regardless of whether or not it was vacant, rather than its non-inclusion compared with the previous budget.

36. The European Union shared the Advisory Committee's view that the publications programme in the economic and social fields should be reviewed in order to eliminate duplication with other United Nations publications.

37. With regard to sections 12 and 13 of the proposed programme budget, the European Union shared the Advisory Committee's concerns about the decline in resources for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), as well as the concerns that had been voiced about their management.

38. The European Union had long advocated closer coordination between sections 14 and 15. In that connection, it welcomed the establishment of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. The multidisciplinary nature of the Organization's crime and drug control programmes should be safeguarded.

39. Drug and crime control were essential elements for social stability, which was why the General Assembly had declared them to be priority areas for the biennium 1998-1999. The European Union welcomed the 4.1 per cent increase in resources for the relevant sections of the proposed programme budget. However, it shared the Advisory Committee's concern at the growing disparity between the number and scope of drug- and crime-related mandates and the level of resources available to implement them.

40. The European Union favoured an integrated approach in the war on drugs which would tackle both production and trafficking and at the same time reduce demand. The regular budget resources for the international drug control programme were allocated mainly for servicing the intergovernmental bodies and the International Narcotics Control Board. His delegation wondered whether those resources would be sufficient to fund the normative work mandated under section 15. The European Union doubted whether the ratio of regular budget to extrabudgetary resources accurately reflected the priority which had been given to drug control in the budget outline and the medium-term plan.

41. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) said it was curious that in paragraph 7.2 (d) of the proposed programme budget no reference was made to the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development.

42. With regard to the subprogramme on the advancement of women, she said it was not clear what role was to be played by the newly created standing committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (para. 7.51). Under the Beijing Platform for Action, the function of providing coordination within the Organization was assigned to the Division for the Advancement of Women.

43. Her delegation would like clarification concerning the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of

women in the Secretariat (para. 7.52). The General Assembly had approved the 50/50 principle for staffing, in accordance with equitable geographical distribution. She wondered whether something else was involved.

44. In paragraph 7.53 (iv) (c), reference was made to the development of guidelines on mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations policies and programmes. As the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had already established such guidelines in various resolutions, there would seem to be no need for action by the Secretariat in that connection.

45. Concerning paragraph 7.55, there was surely no need for outside expertise in the area of the status of women, which was within the remit of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General and the Division for the Advancement of Women, as defined by the Beijing Platform for Action. It appeared that some of the activities contemplated in the previous budget had not been implemented, in part because of financial constraints; the Advisory Committee's comments on Part IV of the proposed programme budget were relevant in that connection. The substantial volume of resources allocated for non-governmental organizations was a source of concern.

46. With regard to the subprogramme on desertification, her delegation would like assurances from the Secretariat that the transitional period until the occupation of the permanent headquarters would not extend beyond December 1998. The subprogramme was an important one and should be implemented in full; cuts were inappropriate.

47. Referring to section 8 (Africa: New Agenda for Development), she said that her delegation fully supported the recommendations in the report of CPC (A/52/16). The implementation of subprogramme 2 was of particular importance.

48. Her delegation attached great importance to the economic and social information and policy analysis programme, particularly in view of the fact that one of the sources for its legislative mandate was the Commission on Population and Development. The Advisory Committee was quite right to suggest that the mandated activities of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis should be separated from its other activities, relating to the Department itself. There were some questions relating to staffing. In the programme on population, for example, a P-5 post had been reclassified to the P-4 level; she wondered whether there had been any changes in functions to justify that reclassification.

49. In section 10, Development support and management services, there was no mention of the International Conference on Population and Development, despite the importance of that Conference among the United Nations international conferences that had provided the Department for Development Support and Management Services with guidelines for its activities. The elimination of some posts in the Department was doubtless legitimate, but it was not clear what criteria had been applied; some clarification from the Secretariat would be appreciated.

50. Concerning section 11A, Trade and development, her delegation supported the reconfirmation of the mandate of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the sole United Nations body concerned with issues of trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The decrease in resources and the staffing cuts to which UNCTAD would be subjected under the proposed programme budget were a source of concern, especially in view of the increased allocations for such items as temporary assistance, overtime, the use of experts and consultants, and contractual services. The Advisory Committee had been right to note in its report that further clarification on such matters would be desirable. The question of publications was particularly moot, and a review by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development would have been in order.

51. With regard to section 11B, International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, ACABQ had correctly noted that arrangements made by the Secretary-General that had not yet been submitted to the General Assembly could not be applicable, and that consequently the 1974 agreement on administrative and financial arrangements for the Centre would remain in force until such time as the General Assembly should adopt a new resolution on the matter.

52. Concerning section 12, Environment, her delegation noted with concern that there had been a substantial reduction in the resources provided for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and various related programmes, including Agenda 21. The Member States needed information about the proposed strengthening of the regional offices of UNEP in the hope of more effective implementation of its activities, and about environmental priorities at the regional level, which were directly related to the financial situation of UNEP.

53. As for section 13, Human settlements, the situation was much the same as in the case of UNEP. It was not clear why the programmes in question, important as they were for the social and economic advancement of the developing

countries, were being progressively marginalized in the proposed programme budget.

54. Her delegation regarded the subject of section 14, Crime control, as particularly important. The medium-term plan for 1998-2001 contained a number of useful recommendations, and excellent work had also been done by the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Cairo in 1995. The proposed programme budget contained a number of ambitious, wide-ranging plans aimed primarily at strengthening international cooperation in that important field. Her delegation would like to receive assurances with respect to the level of resources allocated to section 14. The proposed programme included no activities aimed at combating terrorism; international cooperation in that area should also be strengthened.

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa (continued)

Section 16 A. Regional Commission (continued)

Section 16 B. Regional Commissions New York Office (continued)

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific (continued)

Section 18. Economic development in Europe (continued)

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean (continued)

Section 20. Economic and social development in Western Asia (continued)

Section 21. Regular programme of technical cooperation (continued)

55. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation attached great importance to economic and social development in Western Asia, in particular, to the activities of the regional commission. In that connection, he supported the priorities in the medium-term plan on environmental issues, as well as measures to improve living conditions and promote economic cooperation. He endorsed the addition of two new priorities: policy coordination, and coordination in the field of statistics and information.

56. Decentralization, as applied to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), should take account of the Agenda for Development and General Assembly resolution 50/227.

57. He was concerned about the proposed abolition of three P-3 and 26 Local level posts. Those proposals should be justified, just as any increase should be. The amount of $5.5 million relating to the move from Amman to Beirut should not be part of the regular budget appropriation.

58. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), responding to questions raised by the representative of the United States concerning paragraphs V.8, V.11 and V.28 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/52/7 (Chap. II, Part V)), said that ACABQ had not yet submitted its overall view on the level of the budget. It would do so in the context of its recommendations on document A/52/303, when it would also make any recommendations involving changes in the Secretary-General's proposals. If ACABQ did not recommend changes, its observations and comments, if concurred by in the Fifth Committee, would serve as a guide to programme managers in implementing the budget.

59. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had no legislative mandate for activities pursuant to the Summit of the Americas, held at Miami in December 1994 (A/52/6/Rev.1, para.19.40 (c)). Her delegation could not support funding for programmes which excluded some Member States of the Organization. Accordingly, she asked for a written break down of the appropriation relating to such activities. Further, the pilot management project could not be implemented without consideration and action by the General Assembly, since it implied changes in the budgetary procedure. She requested written clarification.

60. **Mr. Hanson-Hall** (Ghana), speaking on behalf of the African Group, stressed the priority to be accorded to the economic and social development of Africa, and in particular the role of the Economic Commission for Africa, with the aim of raising the standard of living of Africans and strengthening economic relations among African countries as well as cooperation with other regions. Resources allocated to ECA should reflect those priorities, but the apparent increase in resources merely reflected the combined effect of the delayed impact of posts established in the biennium 1996-1997, the cost of maintenance of the new conference centre, and the new application of standardized vacancy rates. Accordingly, more resources needed to be allocated.

61. He commended the ongoing reform measures at ECA, and noted the biennialization of the Commission's meetings and the reduction in the number of meetings. The deployment of staff to the subregional offices would reduce travel and would lead to greater operational effectiveness.

62. The African Group attached great importance to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI) (A/52/6/Rev.1, para. 16A.39), and supported their continued funding. Funding from other sources should be encouraged.

63. He asked for clarification of the rationale underlying the allocation of $225,400 for contractual translation and editing, while at the same time two P-3 translator posts were to be abolished. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that future budget submissions should indicate more clearly intended users of United Nations publications (A/52/7, para.V.7).

64. **Mr. Retta** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Ghana. The backstopping activities of ECA facilitated the implementation of global commitments at the regional and national levels, and the Commission provided a neutral forum for policy debate focused on the specific needs of Africa.

65. Following reform, there was now a congruence between organizational and programmatic structures, as well as a clustering of related activities under a smaller number of subprogrammes in the interest of synergy and greater efficiency. The new strategic directions had been endorsed by the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning. There was also support for streamlining the Commission's intergovernmental machinery with a view to reducing the number of subsidiary bodies and the frequency of meetings, eliminating overlap and promoting coordination. As a result, the Commission had sharpened its focus and improved its programme delivery.

66. Adequate budgetary support was needed for ECA. The Commission's programme to resolve the continent's economic and social problems was the only means of countering its ongoing marginalization. The Committee must look at ways and means of finding additional resources.

67. **Mr. Ahounou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Ghana. African countries were subject to complex contradictions in their development and were encountering the difficulties inherent in all situations in which social structures underwent change. There was a need for greater understanding and objectivity in viewing those problems.

68. He welcomed the reform of ECA; the resulting savings should help the process of decentralization to the five subregional centres. His delegation found it difficult to accept the idea that the savings arising from the abolition of 55 posts should be used for consultants and experts, and did not agree that the use of consultants and experts helped to improve the functioning of the Secretariat. The Organization contained a mine of intellectually capable staff able to discharge their functions provided confidence was placed in them and they were given appropriate resources.

69. Although programmes for Africa were a priority area under the medium-term plan, a comparison of the regular budget for the current biennium and that for the biennium 1998-1999 left little room for optimism. The resources allocated to Africa under Part V of the proposed programme budget were more or less the same as those allocated under other sections. In particular, referring to the opposition of one delegation to resource growth and to funding for IDEP and UNAFRI, he reiterated that those Institutes played an essential role and should receive additional funding.

70. Economic and social issues, which were of concern to many delegations, should have the same priority as humanitarian issues, and resources should reflect the priorities defined by the medium-term plan. Although resources for Africa had increased slightly, they did not meet expectations. He hoped that economic and social development would be accorded greater priority, otherwise the United Nations could never achieve its aim of world peace, democracy and human rights. Conflicts, which the Organization sought to counter though peacekeeping operations, would only increase unless more attention was paid to the reduction of poverty.

71. **Mr. Dobe-Mbalanga** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that his delegation fully supported the position of the African Group on section 16. While it was true that some African countries were showing signs of growth and others even had GDP growth rates higher than their demographic growth rates, that was not enough to reduce poverty in Africa. The African situation was still characterized by uncoordinated economic management, which had led, *inter alia*, to tensions among ethnic groups. ECA therefore had an important role to play as an instrument for the implementation of policies which could meet Africa's needs. The resources allocated to the Commission were not, however, commensurate with its tasks. His delegation therefore urged that such resources should be provided from the regular budget and increased to a level which would allow ECA to achieve its goals. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI) should also be funded under the regular budget.

72. His country had just undergone a political change after a war of liberation which had overthrown a hateful dictatorship. The Government now in power had inherited a disastrous economic and social situation, especially in the eastern part of the country, which had taken in a massive flow of refugees and suffered the destruction of its economic and social infrastructures. The international community had a responsibility to provide substantial resources for the rebuilding of those infrastructures. Before the arrival of the refugees, his country had benefited from public and private international aid for the protection of the national parks in the eastern part of the country. The resumption of such aid would enable economic activities to be started up again in the region of the parks and also prevent the disappearance of threatened species of animals unique to the region.

73. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation attached great importance to regional cooperation for development, which should be a priority for the United Nations. It appreciated, in particular, the role played by ESCAP and its commitment to regional development. It therefore endorsed the relevant parts of the proposed programme budget but emphasized the need to strengthen the role of ESCAP in operational activities, particularly technical assistance and advisory services.

74. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller), responding to the points raised by the representative of Cuba, said that he would seek from the Executive Secretary of ECLAC information about the cost to the United Nations of holding the Miami Summit, together with a breakdown of expenditures on such activities during the current biennium. He understood that an ad hoc working group of ECLAC would be meeting before the end of November to take another look at the pilot management project.

75. He could inform the representative of Ghana that ECA had had great difficulty in keeping the two P-3 translator posts filled. In view of the proposed reduction in the number of meetings, the Executive Secretary had thought that the posts could be abolished.

76. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that the answers given by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee confirmed his delegation's view that it would be helpful for the informal consultations if the Advisory Committee could provide a list of all its recommendations and comments on the proposed programme budget and the reform proposals contained in document A/52/303. He was correct that some of the recommendations would have financial implications either reducing or increasing the proposed amounts.

77. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that he would convey the request to the Advisory Committee, which would decide how to proceed. It would not at the current stage be able to provide information on its recommendations on the reform proposals. It intended to indicate the level of the proposed budget for the biennium 1998-1999 and comment on the other actions proposed by the Secretary-General towards the end of the session, when it would also deal with the issue of recosting. It also had to report to the Fifth Committee on the Secretary-General's report on currency and inflation.

78. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that, leaving aside the sections of the proposed budget affected by the reform proposals, the Advisory Committee had made specific recommendations and comments on all the other sections of the budget. That was the material which his delegation would like to have listed.

79. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was at present discussing the two International Tribunals and would not have time to take up the United States request before the informal consultations on the budget proposals began. As he had pointed out at earlier meetings of the Fifth Committee, the Advisory Committee had not yet indicated the overall level of the budget because of the unusual circumstances connected with the reform proposals. It had been unable to follow its usual practice of providing a single first report containing full details of its recommendations. The reform proposals would lead to additional reductions and the Advisory Committee did not want to have to do its work twice. It had therefore decided that the financial implications of the recommendations made in its first report, which were not great, would be incorporated in its report on the reform proposals. In any event, the Fifth Committee would not be able to take any decisions in the informal consultations on the amounts of the budget proposals until later in the session.

80. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), supported by **Mr. Marcondes de Carvalho** (Brazil), said that his delegation supported the position of the Chairman of ACABQ. It appealed to the members of the Committee not to pursue the discussion.

81. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should defer the question until the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had had an opportunity to consult his colleagues.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.